

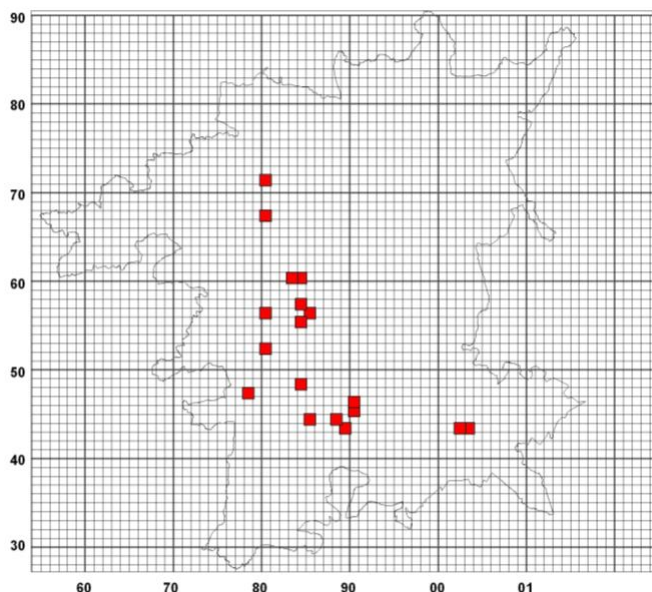
The invasion of Worcestershire by Ivy Bees *Colletes hederæ*

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The Ivy bee was described as new to science in 1993 from specimens found in southern Europe (Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Society (BWARS) fact sheet – see web site). The first records in Britain were in Dorset in 2001 and subsequently the bee has spread rapidly along the south coast. It then started to spread northward and the first Gloucestershire records were in 2011.

In Worcestershire, following a sighting of a single bee at Wolverley (Westwood 2013), the first colony was found in Stourport-on-Severn in 2014 (Scott 2014).

2015 brought a sharp increase in records and the known Worcestershire distribution to end 2015 is shown in the map (01).



01. *Colletes hederæ* (Ivy bee) Ivy bee Worcestershire distribution map March 2016

Recording the expected invasion and spread is of great interest and this note is an appeal to readers to keep a lookout and send in records. The bee is unmistakable and the colonies striking and busy when few other bees are on the wing. We would be very pleased to look at photos to check records so please send images to me if you think you have found the bee. Record date, site name, grid reference (8-figure please), number, and notes on the sighting. Records may be sent directly to Worcestershire Biological Records Centre at records@wbrc.org.uk.

Ivy Bees are dependent of ivy flowers for pollen and nectar and are active from September through to November when ivy is flowering. They rarely visit other flowers. Although nominally solitary bees (unlike colonial honey bees and bumblebees which have queens and workers) they nest in aggregations, often of many individuals, excavating nest holes in the ground. Nest burrows are excavated by females in loose often sandy soil with little or no vegetation cover.

Males are far more numerous than females and emerge first. Females emerging from underground are immediately submerged in mating clusters of many males which hang about waiting for them. This activity draws attention to the colony which is usually not far from flowering ivy. In 2015 many bees were visiting an extensive growth of ivy on Foregate Street Train Station in Worcester (Green 2015) and bees were recorded on ivy at several sites in Worcester. The Worcestershire Wildlife Trust was contacted by a lady reporting a large colony in her garden off Northwick Road in Worcester which I visited. She wrote a note for the parish magazine resulting in a report of another colony from a nearby garden. There were

thousands of bees at these sites. Worcester could be a host to many colonies. Reports of colonies also came from Bransford, Grimley, Evesham and other sites. Example shown in pictures 01, 02, 03, 04, 05

The BWARS website is very useful for information and identification www.bwars.com.

References

Green, David M. 2015. The Ivy Bee *Colletes hederæ* Schmidt & Westrich, 1993 (Hymenoptera: Colletidae) at Worcester Foregate Street railway station, on an extensive growth of ivy. *Worcestershire Record* 39:15
 Scott, Jane. 2015. Discovery of Breeding Colony of Ivy Bee *Colletes hederæ*, in Stourport-on-Severn. *Worcestershire Record*, 37:7-8
 Westwood, B. 2013. - Ivy Bees *Colletes hederæ* in Worcestershire. *Worcestershire Record*, 35:43.



02. *Colletes hederæ* (Ivy bee) Female Stourport. John Bingham.



03. *Colletes hederæ* (Ivy bee) Male Stourport. John Bingham



04. *Colletes hederæ* (Ivy bee) Stourport mating cluster. John Bingham.



05. *Colletes hederæ* (Ivy bee) Female Worcester, digging nest hole. Harry Green.



06. *Colletes hederæ* (Ivy bee) Evesham, Gary Farmer.



07. *Colletes hederæ* (Ivy bee), Bransford. Tony Simpson.

Images

- 01. *Colletes hederæ* (Ivy bee) Ivy bee Worcestershire distribution map March 2016
- 02. *Colletes hederæ* (Ivy bee) Female Stourport. John Bingham.
- 03. *Colletes hederæ* (Ivy bee) Male Stourport. John Bingham
- 04. *Colletes hederæ* (Ivy bee) Stourport mating cluster. John Bingham.
- 05. *Colletes hederæ* (Ivy bee) Female Worcester, digging nest hole. Harry Green.

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